

Preschoolers' Responses to Suboptimal Sources of Information

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Introduction:

Preschoolers have some abilities to track who is a good source of information (Laland, 2004). In most past studies, children are asked to distinguish between accurate vs. inaccurate sources. The goal of the current project is to test how children respond to two sources that provide incomplete information. Specifically, we contrast one source that is inaccurate (providing an incorrect label for a common object), with another source that provides irrelevant information (giving a correct object function when asked to label the object). We hypothesize that children who talk about the different sources may be more able to track which is better.

Method:

Forty children are presented with two puppets and are told that they will provide a label for a familiar object. The first puppet labels the object incorrectly. The second puppet provides the correct function for the object, but no label. Children are then asked to choose which puppet to get new information from. For this poster, we recorded what the children said in response to each puppet.

Results:

Data collection is currently underway. To date we have found that many of the children said something related to the task. These vocalizations include talking about the puppet, the object being labeled and providing explicit corrections of incorrect information. Once transcriptions of the children's vocalizations are complete, we will test whether this predicts which puppet they chose as a good source of information.

Conclusion:

The results of this project will help us understand what abilities underlie tracking who is a good source of information. A relation between children's vocalizations and their evaluations of sources may indicate that language skills or attention is partially responsible for source monitoring abilities.